AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. **(Previously Presented)** An image decoding method for generating a predictive pixel value of a current picture to be decoded, using pixel values of two reference pictures, and decoding the current picture using the predictive pixel value, the method comprising:

a first parameter calculation step of calculating a first parameter corresponding to a temporal distance between the current picture and a first reference picture;

a second parameter calculation step of calculating a second parameter corresponding to a temporal distance between the first reference picture and a second reference picture;

a judgment step of judging whether or not a value of a third parameter calculated based on the first and the second parameters is included in a predetermined range;

a predictive pixel value generation step of

(i) generating a predictive pixel value of the current picture by scaling a pixel value of the first reference picture and a pixel value of the second reference picture using a weighting coefficient calculated by the first parameter and the second parameter, in a case where it is judged, in said judgment step, that the value of the third parameter is included in the predetermined range, and

(ii) generating a predictive pixel value of the current picture by scaling a pixel value of the first reference picture and a pixel value of the second reference picture using a weighting coefficient of a predetermined value, in a case where it is judged, in said judgment step, that the value of the third parameter is not included in the predetermined range; and

a decoding step of decoding the current picture using the predictive pixel value calculated in said predictive pixel value generation step.

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2-18. (Canceled)

19. (Previously Presented) An image decoding apparatus which generates a predictive pixel value of a current picture to be decoded, using pixel values of two reference pictures, and decodes the current picture using the predictive pixel value, said apparatus comprising:

a first parameter calculation unit operable to calculate a first parameter corresponding to a temporal distance between the current picture and a first reference picture;

a second parameter calculation unit operable to calculate a second parameter corresponding to a temporal distance between the first reference picture and a second reference picture;

a judgment unit operable to judge whether or not a value of a third parameter calculated based on the first and second parameters is included in a predetermined range;

a predictive pixel value generation unit operable to

(i) generate a predictive pixel value of the current picture by scaling a pixel value of the first reference picture and a pixel value of the second reference picture using a weighting coefficient calculated by the first parameter and the second parameter, in a case where said judgment unit judges that the value of the third parameter is included in the predetermined range, and

(ii) generate a predictive pixel value of the current picture by scaling a pixel value of the first reference picture and a pixel value of the second reference picture using a weighting

coefficient of a predetermined value, in a case where said judgment unit judges that the value of the third parameter is not included in the predetermined range; and

a decoding unit operable to decode the current picture using the predictive pixel value calculated by said predictive pixel value generation unit.

20-23. (Canceled)